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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [LI](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERIA: HOUSE SPEAKER ALLEGEDLY ORDERS BEATING OF FORMER  
LAWMAKER

REF. A: 2008 MONROVIA 466

REF. B: 2008 MONROVIA 749

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Former lawmaker in the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA) Prince Toe has accused Speaker of the House Alex Tyler of ordering his bodyguards to beat him after Toe's pickup nearly collided with a vehicle in Tyler's convoy January 18. The Monrovia Magisterial Court issued a writ of arrest against House Speaker J. Alex Tyler on January 21, but withdrew it for "procedural errors" after Minister of Justice Philip Banks intervened. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Former lawmaker in the NTLA and representative of former warring faction Movement of Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) Prince Toe was driving his pickup January 18 and allegedly had a near collision with a vehicle in Speaker of the House Alex Tyler's convoy. Toe alleges that Tyler's convoy followed his vehicle through the Monrovia suburb of Gardnersville and stopped him at his church. Toe entered into the church for the Sunday service, but says Tyler's bodyguards physically pulled him out of the building and took him to a local police depot. Toe contends the bodyguards beat him up outside the police station in front of the Speaker and stole two kilograms worth of gold, worth \$75,000, and LD 5,000 (USD 83) that was on him. Toe alleges he was briefly detained at the station after the beating until a local clergyman intervened for his release.

13. (SBU) Toe reported the case to the Monrovia Magisterial Court and Montserrado County Attorney Samuel Jacobs sought an arrest warrant for Speaker Tyler for aggravated assault and criminal solicitation (premeditated theft). The warrant, which was hastily issued and did not have all of the requisite signatures, was served to Speaker Tyler at his Capitol Office. According to the immunity protection Liberian Legislators enjoy, they cannot be served warrants at the Capitol or on the way to or from official events. Therefore, Minister of Justice Philip Banks intervened to order the Magisterial Court to rescind the arrest warrant.

14. (SBU) Speaker Tyler denied he ordered Toe's "flogging" (the term used in the Liberian vernacular), but did not attend the regular session of the House January 22 because he was busy consulting with his lawyers and members of the House Judiciary Committee on the case. Local press covered the case extensively. Tyler presided over the joint session of the Legislature January 26 for President Sirleaf's State of the Nation Address.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: If true, this is the latest incident of a high official abusing his power through violence (although we wonder why Toe was taking two kilograms of gold with him to church). Other instances include Senator Roland Kaine, now on trial for allegedly ordering the killing of several youths during a land dispute (Ref A). Senator Nathaniel Innis was accused of beating a young woman in June 2008 for making noise in his neighborhood (Ref B). Chief Justice Johnnie N. Lewis angrily ordered the camera of a local journalist to be seized for "illegally taking his photograph" during an official public appearance in November 2008. Deputy Minister of Public Works Roderick Smith allegedly ordered the beating of General Auditing Commission auditor Winsley Nanka in December 2008 after Nanka demanded more documents to verify earlier documents the

Ministry had submitted. Whether or not all these accounts turn out to be accurate, the public at least is responding negatively to this perceived abuse of power. END COMMENT.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD